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PERCEPTIONS OF IOWA AND NEBRASKA LEGISLATORS
REGARDING SECONDARY AND ADULT AGRICULTURAL
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by
Bruce Burger

A THESIS

Presented To The Faculty of
the Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
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for the Degree of Master of Science

Major: Agricultural Education

Under the Supervision of Professor James T. Horner

Lincoln, Nebraska

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PERCEPTIONS OF IOWA AND NEBRASKA LEGISLATORS
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Bruce A. Burger M.S.

University of Nebraska, 1988

Advisor: Dr. James T. Horner

As the capacity for rural communities to provide education services decreases, educators are looking towards state legislators for support. Field (1984) reported that legislators must become more familiar with vocational education as they address the economic and social needs of the future. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions held by Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding secondary and adult agricultural education programs conducted within the public school system.

The population for this study consisted of state legislators in Iowa and Nebraska. Seventy legislators, thirty-five from each state, were randomly selected for the study. Legislators were mailed a survey containing twenty-two attitudinal statements relating to agricultural education. Legislators were asked to rate the importance of the current situation and future direction of each statement. Comparisons were made between the different demographic groups of legislators. Cohen's Power Analysis was used to determine meaningful difference at a large effect size.

Based on the data gathered, the following results were found.

A meaningful difference was not observed between legislators' perceptions of the current situation and future direction of agricultural education.

While agriculture and general education issues were perceived as being of relatively high importance in Iowa and Nebraska, agricultural education was perceived as being of lower importance. Legislators who had ties with agriculture were more supportive of issues relating to agricultural education.

The role of the secondary vocational agriculture program was seen as being limited to rural high schools. Legislators seemed not to be familiar with the other aspects of agricultural education programs.

Legislators were not supportive of any changes in the source of funding for educational programs. While they were supportive of the general funding of education, they did not support funding for agricultural education.

The above findings indicated that changes in the amount of support from state legislators will not come from within. The agricultural education profession must initiate programs to increase legislators awareness of the needs and benefits of agricultural education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, the funding process for educational programs is under debate. Articles like "School Tax Reform: Wouldn't it be Lovely" (Lehnert, 1988) cover the pages of magazines and newspapers. All of them demanding more bang for the buck.

It would seem then that educational funding reform should be quickly and easily carried out. Dick Lehnert (1988), Editor for the Michigan Farmer and member of the Saint John's School Board, suggested that the general reaction of voters is not supportive when they see higher salary costs for people to teach fewer students in expensive facilities. The results are that educational costs are rising seven percent per year, while educational revenues are only increasing at two percent per year.

Harl (1985) stated that there are educational needs of individuals, both youth and adult in the rural areas. At the same time, the capacity for rural communities to provide these educational services is diminishing. Land values have dropped by one-half, cutting the wealth of rural communities. Increased emotional trauma of indebted farmers and business persons has created a negative climate for increasing the support of educational programs locally.

Administrators and school boards are facing a major challenge in making ends meet. With resistance to

increasing local tax millage and limited federal and state support, schools are often forced to cut programs. Often elective programs are the first targeted. Extended contracts, expensive equipment and lower student to teacher ratios seems to be attractive reasons for justifying this move.

By eliminating vocational education in the local school systems, we eliminate opportunity for people and communities to grow. Lierman and Riesenbergs (1987) cited the report, "Future Direction for Secondary Agriculture in Idaho" which explained that vocational education builds upon the academic education foundation and responds to the diverse learning styles of students.

Niebla (1987) stated that only twenty-nine percent of the 1985 high school graduates are expected to complete college with a bachelor's degree, while the current job market requires higher levels of skills, including the ability to solve problems, communicate and transfer skills to new processes.

Shoemaker (1987) reported that the changes in our economy will result in the need to provide retraining and upgrading programs for more than 300,000 adults annually, in order to meet the needs of new and expanding industries.

Persons (1986) stressed the broader goal of vocational education in helping students grow through exploring careers, developing leadership qualities and a host of

other non-technical aims that are not currently being offered in general education.

According to Herren (1986), the movement to establish vocational education in this country started with the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. Both industry and agriculture were coping with problems brought about from the development of new technologies. Educators like John Dewey were advocating changes in the educational system from teacher oriented methods of rote learning to student oriented methods such as problem solving. The reasons for starting vocational education in 1917 are still valid in 1988. One of today's most important issue is concerned with maintaining quality vocational programs.

One alternative to reducing or eliminating vocational education programs is to increase state funding for vocational education programs. Field (1984) reported that state legislators do not have a complete understanding of vocational education programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Legislators must become more familiar with vocational education as they address the economic and social needs of the future.

Statement of the Problem

Perceptions of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding secondary and adult agricultural education programs are not known. The agricultural education profession needs to know

these perceptions in order to identify and address issues that pertain to legislative support of secondary and adult agricultural education.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify demographic information of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators, including their educational background and legislative experiences.
2. Determine the perceptions of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding agricultural education programs.
3. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators regarding the current situation and future direction of agricultural education programs.
4. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding agricultural education programs.
5. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators from rural districts and legislators from urban districts regarding agricultural education programs.
6. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators with agricultural occupations and legislators with non-agricultural occupations regarding agricultural education programs.
7. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators who had secondary vocational training and those who did not have secondary vocational training regarding agricultural education programs.
8. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators who had post-secondary vocational experience and those who did not have post-secondary vocational experience regarding agricultural education programs.

9. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators with less than six years of legislative experience and legislators with six or more years of legislative experience regarding agricultural education programs.
10. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators who were raised on a farm and legislators who were not raised on a farm regarding agricultural education programs.

Significance of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions held by Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding secondary and adult agricultural education programs within the public school system. In the past two years, legislation pertaining to the support of vocational agriculture has been introduced into each state's legislature with varying results.

In the spring of 1987, a bill was introduced and passed by the Iowa Legislature relating to and making appropriations for the expansion of the vocational education administration. It was the intent of the General Assembly that an amount up to \$40,000 be used for the salaries and support for two additional full-time equivalent consultant positions. These consultants are to assist in the implementation and improvement of secondary school vocational agriculture programs.

In the spring of 1988, another bill was introduced and passed by the Iowa Legislature stressing their support of the aims and purposes of vocational agriculture in Iowa.

As a result of this legislation, a special advisory council for vocational agriculture was set up. The duties of this council are to review, develop and recommend standards for secondary and post-secondary agricultural education.

In 1987 and 1988, the Vocational Education Program Support Act was introduced into the Nebraska Unicameral. This bill stressed the need for vocational education within the state of Nebraska and proposed the allocation of funding at the rate of \$25.00 for each student enrolled in each vocational education program in a high school grade. In both years, the bill was initially passed in the Unicameral but was later vetoed by the Governor. In 1987, the reason given for vetoing was the issue of increasing educational funding during a period of budget cuts. In 1988, the reason cited for vetoing was that such a bill would dictate the curriculum of local school districts. In both cases, the Unicameral could not get enough votes to override the Governor's veto.

Limitations of the Study

The study's scope was limited to perceptions of State Legislators in Iowa and Nebraska. It was assumed that legislators, not their aides, completed the questionnaire. The specific influences of external factors in developing perceptions laid beyond the scope of this study, but

demographic information was gathered to study possible differences in legislators' perceptions.

Definition of Terms

Adult Agricultural Education:

Educational programs designed to meet the needs of people, beyond the high school age, who are involved in vocational or avocational agricultural pursuits.

Agriculture:

An industry that employs people in the fields of agricultural production, agricultural processing, agricultural supplies and service, agricultural mechanics, horticulture, natural resources and other agricultural specialty areas.

Education about Agriculture:

Education programs designed to inform and broaden the perceptions of individuals about agriculture.

Education in Agriculture:

Educational programs designed to prepare individuals for employment in agriculture.

Effect Size:

A relative measure that expresses the magnitude of difference desired between two samples in order to have meaning for the researcher.

Meaningful Difference:

A term used by Kirk (1984) to describe a value that determines if there is a practical difference between the mean scores of two samples. This value is based on the effect size desired and standard deviation.

Rural Districts:

Districts where fifty percent or more of the constituents' income is generated directly by agricultural industries.

Secondary Agricultural Education:

Education programs designed to provide vocational training, college preparation or career exploration in the field of agriculture for students enrolled in high school.

Urban Districts:

Districts where fifty percent or more of the constituents' income is generated by services, businesses or industries not directly related to agricultural industries.

Vocational Education:

Education in any specialized field which makes an individual more employable in one group of occupations than in another.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Need for Vocational Education

Niebla (1987) stated that by the year 2000, an estimated three out of every four jobs will require training beyond the high school level; however, eighty percent of these jobs will not require a four year college degree. Vocational education, which prepares students for these jobs, must be viewed as an essential investment in the future.

Martin (1986) reported that education still has an important role in helping farmers and agribusiness persons in meeting new challenges. In recent years, many questions have been raised about the need for adult education conducted through the secondary vocational agriculture programs. In his study, Martin found that young and adult farmers in Iowa rated educational programs in production agriculture to be high quality and important.

Case (1988) stated that there is a need for adult supplemental education in agriculture beyond the job preparation programs of the community colleges and four year institutions. The clientele of this supplemental education would included agriculturalists who wish to upgrade their skills and others with avocational interests. These programs need to address new technology, policy and

economics, along with personal skills relating to improving self-image, communication and decision making skills.

Change in Vocational Education

Persons (1985) stressed the importance of vocational agriculture keeping pace with new ideas, skills and technologies. While the cost of upgrading programs is high, the cost of an obsolescent program is greater. Persons further stated that the purpose of vocational agriculture is to supply relevant skills necessary for employment, along with developing the student as a person. If a vocational program does not have a solid core of state of the art technical knowledge, skills and principles, the goals of the program can not be reached, and students, parents, administrators and others will view the program as frivolous.

Anderson (1985) explained that there need to be program changes in adult agricultural education programs because of the many technological changes in agriculture. With these changes, agricultural education must address two clientele groups: a) those concerned with maximizing profits and b) those concerned with avocational education.

Peterson (1985) outlined three underlying purposes for vocational education: a) preparation for job entry, b) retraining for a new job and c) upgrading skills for a present job. Little time has been spent in coordinating

efforts in these three areas. A new approach of including both day school students and agricultural personnel in the same courses was suggested. The co-mingling impact of youth and adults in class discussions could have a positive influence on all participants, while at the same time filling an important community need.

Niebla (1987) stated that leadership in vocational education profession is important at the national level; however, it is even more critical at the state and local levels. It is in the state and local school districts where programmatic changes can occur for progressive and quality vocational education.

Perceptions of Vocational Education

Lehnert (1988) pointed out several perceptions that lead to the declining support of vocational agriculture. The poor image of agriculture has caused parents and others to advise students away from agricultural careers even though there is a shortage of qualified people to fill technical and professional positions. With the diversity of agriculture, many perceive vocational agriculture programs as being too narrow and not capable of producing graduates who can enter the work-force without further education. Finally, some feel that the quality of the teachers is not what it used to be and that teachers are not capable of bringing life to the programs.

Jewell (1987) reported that administrators perceived that the main purpose of vocational agriculture programs is to train high school students for gainful employment in agricultural occupations. Administrators also felt that a general knowledge about agriculture and its importance in our society is beneficial for all students entering related occupations.

Miller and Krill (1985) found that superintendents in Ohio held different perceptions of the roles of adult education programs conducted through the local school system. While superintendents felt there was a need for these programs, they disagreed on the concepts of free education for adults, adequacy of state and federal funding, utilizing local tax dollars for support, utilizing local facilities during school hours and adult programs conducted by someone other than the vocational agriculture instructor. They concluded that the attitudes of Ohio superintendents are positive in regard to the adult program being needed, the benefits derived and in the efficacy of the Young Farmer Association.

Adelaine and Foster (1987) conducted a study similar to that conducted by Miller and Krill. The findings of this study supported many of the findings of Miller and Krill. Administrators tended to safeguard traditional school funding and structure, while teachers felt adult education programs should be funded similar to the

secondary system. Administrators, with current adult educational programs in their school system, viewed adult education more positively than respondents not having adult educational programs in their school systems.

Field (1984) in his study found that legislative perceptions in the Midwest needed to become more sophisticated in order to coordinate with the private sector and other training programs. Legislators in one state felt that it was necessary to increase funding to secondary programs in order to balance the educational program offerings. In general, state legislators did not have an accurate understanding of secondary and post-secondary vocational education programs in their state.

Funding of Vocational Education

Lehnert (1988) reported that the logic of making school operations subject to local millage votes is certainly unclear. While federal and state agencies demand excellence in education, they allow the local voters to determine adequate funding for educational programs. Legislative action is needed in revising the financing structure for education.

Harl (1985) suggested that the funding of rural education is a critical issue. Unlike urban areas, revenues in rural districts are tied directly to the farm

economy. Recent government policy, over production and other factors have diminished the capacity of these areas to provide the support needed for educational services. As more farmers and businesspersons liquidate, the demand for adult education and expanded programs for youth will increase. New strategies must be implemented to shift the funding patterns from local school districts to the state.

Shoemaker (1987) explained that federal funding has often supplied the incentive for additional state and local funding. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Perkins Act of 1984 provided risk capital for the development of new ventures. State funds have often provided growth and expansion of vocational education programs after the value of these programs were proven by the investment of federal dollars.

Case (1985) pointed out that federal funding is becoming more complicated and difficult to get. Vocational agriculture educators must be initiating forward-looking programs for innovation, improvement, development and modernization of programs, rather than just maintaining the status quo. The most effective means for vocational agriculture to tap these funds is by influencing their state plans. Agricultural education leaders can have an impact on the state plan by communicating their goals to advisory groups.

Increasing Legislative Support

Schumacher and Kahler (1987) concluded that there is a need to include policy-makers in agricultural activities. Respondents in their study tended to place more importance on agriculture, if they were involved in agriculture. State legislators as a group placed less emphasis on agriculture than other groups of respondents.

Bowen (1987) felt that vocational agriculture, in the past, has taken a very subtle approach in influencing legislation. Public relations and informative activities often generated favorable outcomes for the profession. As today's society is becoming more complex, political involvement may take on a new meaning. Since the future of agricultural education hinges on the political environment, the profession must look at using high power tactics in the political process in order to insure agricultural education's future.

Mercer and Latta (1987) reported that state councils on vocational education exist in every state today. These councils can be a valuable resource in developing the framework or a series of guiding principles for formulating vocational education policy in the state.

Lee (1985) concluded that legislation regarding vocational funding has an important role in shaping the trends and actions of vocational agriculture. The most recent is the Carl D. Perkins Act which stresses the

improvement of current programs. While this act does not supply maintenance funding, it is likely to have far-reaching effects. Perhaps the language of the act is based on our behavior of being content with the current structure of agricultural education.

Summary

There is a growing need for agricultural education at both the secondary and adult levels in our communities. Past experiences have shown that agricultural education at these levels can be conducted through the secondary school system. While administrators are leery of providing free education for all adult students, they are usually supportive of adult agricultural education conducted through the secondary vocational agriculture program. With increased financial pressure, the question of the need, benefit, operation and funding of these programs is becoming a major issue. As local school districts look to state government for funding, they are not finding the support they need. Legislators do not fully understand the importance of secondary and adult agricultural education.

This study attempts to use the information in the literature review to identify some of the perceptions of state legislators regarding the delivery of agricultural education. By identifying these perceptions, the agricultural education profession may better address the

issue of gaining legislative support for agricultural education.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The study was designed as a descriptive study using a questionnaire to determine the perceptions of state legislators regarding agricultural education programs conducted through the public school system.

Null Hypotheses

The following Null Hypotheses were tested in the analysis of the study:

1. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators regarding the current situation and future direction of agricultural education programs.
2. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of Iowa Legislators and Nebraska Legislators regarding agricultural education programs.
3. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators from rural districts and legislators from urban districts regarding agricultural education programs.
4. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators with agricultural occupations and legislators with non-agricultural occupations regarding agricultural education programs.
5. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators who had secondary vocational training and legislators who have not had secondary vocational training regarding agricultural education programs.
6. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators who had post-secondary vocational experience and legislators who have not had post-secondary vocational experience regarding agricultural education programs.
7. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators with less than six years of legislative experience and legislators with six or more years of

legislative experience regarding agricultural education programs.

8. There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators who were raised on a farm and legislators who were not raised on a farm regarding agricultural education programs.

Description of Population

The population for this study consisted of all of Iowa and Nebraska State Legislators. Legislators from these two states were studied because of the difference in the levels of support provided for vocational agriculture in the past two years. Iowa has passed legislation concerning the support for vocational agriculture both in 1987 and 1988, while Nebraska has introduced legislation but was unable to pass it into law.

The legislative structure of the two states are quite different. Iowa's General Assembly consists of a two chamber legislature with 50 legislators in the Senate and 100 legislators in the House. Nebraska has a Unicameral Legislature that consists of 49 legislators.

Sample Selection

Cohen's power analysis, as described by Kirk (1984), was used to determine the adequate power (n) needed for detecting a meaningful difference between respondent groups. This procedure sets the minimum size needed for the sample, while providing adequate protection against Type I Error and minimizing the effects of extraneous

variables.

Based on the type of study (two-sample test with two-tailed hypotheses), beta level of .10, alpha level of .05 and a large effect size (0.8 of a standard deviation), it was determined that a random sample of approximately 35 legislators from each state would provide a representative sample.

Preparation of the Instrument

A review of literature was used to identify attitudinal statements pertaining to agricultural education. In 1987, Adelaine and Foster conducted a study pertaining to the attitudes of superintendents, principles and vocational agriculture instructors regarding adult education. This study contained 30 statements concerning the a) need, b) benefit, c) operation and d) funding of adult agricultural education programs.

From the instrument used in Adelaine and Foster's study a preliminary survey was developed. This survey contained the initial thirty statements from the above mentioned study, twenty additional statements concerning the a) need, b) benefit, c) operation and d) funding of secondary vocational agriculture and three demographic questions. A four point, bi-polar scale was included to measure individual responses regarding the attitudinal statements of the present situation of agricultural

education.

The preliminary questionnaire was submitted to a jury to determine content validity. This jury consisted of teacher educators from the Agricultural Education Department at the University of Nebraska. The jury made the following suggestions to improve the instrument: a) reduce the survey length two pages, b) change the structure of the survey to measure importance of the current situation and future direction of agricultural education and c) change the scale for response from a four point, bi-polar scale to a 3 point likert scale with a place for unknown importance.

The survey was revised to include twenty-two attitudinal statements concerning both secondary and adult agricultural education and six demographic questions. The Likert Method was used to measure the perceptions regarding the current situation and future direction of agricultural education. A rating scale of 1-3 was to determine the importance of the statement. A value of "1" was used to indicate a statement of high importance. A value of "2" was used to indicate a statement of moderate importance. A value of "3" was used to indicate a statement of low importance. A value of "4" was used to indicate that the individual did not know the importance of the statement. The revised questionnaire was resubmitted to the jury and was approved with minor revisions.

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was given to a jury of three Nebraska Legislators to determine clarity. These legislators were not part of the Nebraska sample. Surveys were completed and returned without any recommendations to improve clarity.

Data Collection Procedure

A mailed questionnaire with a cover letter (Appendix B) was distributed to each individual separately. The cover letter included instructions that stressed the importance that the legislators, not their aides, complete the survey. A self addressed, stamped envelope was included with the survey.

A follow-up mailing was sent to those individuals who did not responded within two weeks of the original mailing. This mailing contained a follow-up letter (Appendix C), a second questionnaire and a self addressed, stamped envelope.

Follow-up phone calls were made to all seventeen individuals who did not responded within two weeks after the second mailing. Information on the questionnaire was then collected during the phone call. Messages were left with the aides or secretaries of eight legislators who could not be personally reached after three telephone calls. Two of these eight legislators returned the questionnaire. A t-test was used to determine that there

were no differences between the perceptions of legislators contacted by the telephone and those who returned the questionnaire by mail.

Data in Table 1 indicate the rate of response for the legislators included in the study. The 70 legislators returned 56 completed surveys for an 80.00 percent return rate. Six legislators (8.57 percent) responded that they do not complete surveys. Of the 35 Iowa Legislators, 27 returned completed questionnaires for a response rate of 77.14 percent. Three Iowa Legislators (4.29 percent) responded that they do not complete surveys. Of the Nebraska Legislators, 29 returned completed questionnaires for a response rate of 82.86 percent. Three Nebraska Legislators (4.29 percent) responded that they do not complete questionnaires.

Table 1.

Response Rate of Legislators

Respondent Group	Mailed	Received	% Total
Iowa Legislators	35	27	77.14
Nebraska Legislators	35	29	82.86
Total	70	56	80.00

Note. Three legislators from Iowa and three legislators from Nebraska responded that they do not participate in survey studies.

Analysis of the Data

The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was utilized for data analysis. Each questionnaire was coded with a number identifying the respondent. A code sheet (Appendix D) was developed to describe the data on the questionnaire. Statements without responses were considered as "missing values". Data from the questionnaire was entered into the University of Nebraska computer system.

A Cronbach Reliability Analysis of the instrument using SAS was completed. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient for the instrument was .9504.

Meaningful difference, based on Cohen's Power Analysis, was used to compare responses. Prior to the start of the study, it was decided to look for a large effect size (.8 of a standard deviation). A meaningful difference was reported if the difference in mean scores from the two sample groups were equal to or larger than .8 of the standard deviation of the total response for that statement (Kirk, 1984).

A t-test was then used to determine if there was any difference between perceptions of the current situation and future direction of agricultural education programs. While statistically significant differences were found on 14 of the 22 attitudinal statements, no meaningful differences were found. From this point on, analysis was run only on the current situation data.

Data analysis on attitudinal statements consisted of calculating means and standard deviation of the data excluding missing values and responses of unknown importance for the different demographic groups. Frequency of responses were calculated for all responses including missing values for the different demographic groups. T-tests were not used since the number of responses and standard deviations were inconsistent between groups.

The following guidelines were used to evaluate the perceptions of legislators regarding agricultural education programs: on a three point scale a mean score of 1 to 1.4 was identified as high importance, a mean score of 1.41 to 1.8 was identified as moderately high importance, a mean score of 1.81 to 2.2 was identified as moderate importance, a mean score of 2.21 to 2.6 was identified as moderately-low importance and a mean score of 2.61 to 3 was identified as low importance.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions held by Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding secondary and adult agricultural education programs conducted through the public school system.

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify demographic information of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators, including their educational background and legislative experiences.
2. Determine the perceptions of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding agricultural education programs.
3. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators regarding the current situation and future direction of agricultural education programs.
4. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between Iowa Legislators and Nebraska Legislators regarding agricultural education programs.
5. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators from rural districts and legislators from urban districts regarding agricultural education programs.
6. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators with agricultural occupations and legislators with non-agricultural occupations regarding agricultural education programs.
7. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators who had secondary vocational education training and legislators who did not have secondary vocational education training regarding agricultural education programs.
8. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators who had post-secondary vocational experience and those who did not have post-secondary vocational experience regarding agricultural education programs.

9. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators with less than six years of legislative experience and legislators with six or more years of legislative experience regarding agricultural education programs.
10. Determine if differences in perceptions exist between legislators who were raised on a farm and legislators who were not raised on a farm regarding secondary and adult agricultural education programs.

Findings and Discussion

Upon analysis of the data the following results were obtained. The findings and discussion in this chapter are arranged in the order of the objective.

Objective 1: Identify demographic information of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators, including their educational background and legislative experiences.

Data in Table 2 reflect the demographic information that describes the background and experiences of the legislators surveyed in this study. The table is divided into demographic groups that were used in subsequent objectives.

Legislative districts were limited to either rural or urban. Some legislators wrote in that their districts were equally urban and rural. Since they identified that the rural sector was an important part, they were considered part of the rural responses.

Legislators were also grouped according to their occupations. Legislative directories from Iowa and Nebraska were used to identify the specific occupation of

Table 2.

Demographic Information of Legislators

Demographic Group	Number	% Total
Iowa	27	48.21
Nebraska	29	51.79
Rural Districts	30	53.57
Urban Districts	26	46.43
Agricultural Occupations	20	35.71
Non-agricultural Occupations	36	64.29
Secondary Vocational Training	27	48.21
No Secondary Vocational Training	29	51.79
Post-Secondary Vocational Experience	29	51.79
No Post-Secondary Vocational Experience	27	48.21
Less than six years of legislative experience	28	50.00
Six or more years of legislative experience	28	50.00
Raised on a farm	30	53.57
Not raised on a farm	26	46.43
Total	56	100.00

each legislator. Using the definition of agriculture found in chapter one, the occupations were then classified as being either agricultural or non-agricultural.

The secondary vocational training includes education

in all secondary vocational areas. It should be noted that vocational agriculture made up approximately 40 percent of those with secondary vocational training.

Post-secondary vocational education experience reflects those legislators who have participated in a post-secondary vocational program. This experience included participation as either a student or a teacher.

Objective 2: Determine the perceptions of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding agricultural education programs.

Information reported was obtained from the responses of the 56 legislators. Responses of "unknown importance" and statements that were left blank were considered as missing values and were not used in calculating the mean and standard deviation of the responses.

Table 3 lists the perceptions of legislators regarding the importance of agriculture. The legislators placed a high level of importance on impact of agriculture in their state (1.09), with 91.07 percent of legislators rating the impact of agriculture in the state as being of high importance. While the level of impact of agriculture in their district was rated considerably lower (1.58), it still reflected a moderately-high level of importance. Fifty-seven percent of the legislators rated the impact of agriculture in their districts as being of high importance.

Table 4 depicts the perceived need for adult education programs. Legislators felt that it was of moderately-high

Table 3.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of the Importance of Agriculture

Statement	Statistic	Value
Impact of agriculture in my state.	M	1.09
	SD	.29
	N	56
Impact of agriculture in my district.	M	1.58
	SD	.76
	N	55

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 to 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 to 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 to 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 to 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 to 3.0 = low importance.

Table 4.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of the Need for Adult Agricultural Education

Statement	Statistic	Value
Need for adult agricultural education programs.	M	1.80
	SD	.71
	N	54
Need for free public adult education in agriculture.	M	2.40
	SD	.68
	N	48

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

importance to provide adult agricultural education programs (1.80); however, they felt that free adult education in agricultural was only of moderately-low importance (2.40).

Table 5 identifies the perceptions of legislators regarding the impact of adult agricultural education programs. While legislators thought that adult agricultural education programs had a moderate impact on changing local agricultural practices (1.88), their perception of the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in providing such programs was of moderately-low importance (2.27). Only fourteen percent of the legislators perceived the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in providing adult agricultural education programs as being of high importance.

Table 6 presents the perceptions of legislators regarding the funding source of adult agricultural education. Legislators felt that the roles of the state and federal government regarding the funding of adult agricultural education programs were very similar, but they did not see the roles as being a major contributor in the funding process. Legislators rated the roles of state government (2.24) and federal government (2.38) as being of moderately-low importance. Only 7.14 percent of the legislators perceived the need for state funding of adult agricultural education programs as being of

Table 5.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of the Impact of Adult Agricultural Education Programs

Statement	Statistic	Value
Impact of adult agricultural education programs on improving local agricultural practices.	M	1.88
	SD	.67
	N	49
Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in providing adult agriculture education programs.	M	2.27
	SD	.74
	N	48

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

high importance. The role of the local school district in funding adult agricultural education programs was seen as being of low importance (2.85) with no legislators rating it as being of high importance. This group of statements had the second highest non-response rate of the survey with 26.79%, 25.00% and 25.00% non-response rates respectively.

Table 7 shows legislators' perceptions of the importance of the "back to the basics" movement. The legislators rated both the need for education to get "back to the basics" (2.18) and the need to incorporate the "back to the basics" movement into vocational agriculture (1.92) as moderately important. Even though both were rated as

Table 6.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of
the Funding of Adult Agricultural Education Programs

Statement	Statistic	Value
Need for the local school district to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs.	M SD N	2.76 .43 41
Need for the state government to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs.	M SD N	2.24 .62 42
Need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs.	M SD N	2.38 .73 42

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

moderately important, there was a fairly large difference in the means (.26). The last statement had a much higher non-response rate (32.14% as compared to 10.71%), suggesting the uncertainty about the need of integrate the "back to the basic" movement into secondary vocational agriculture. Only 14.29 percent of the legislators perceived the integration of the basics into secondary vocational agriculture programs as being of high importance.

Table 7.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of the Importance of the "Back to the Basics" Movement

Statement	Statistic	Value
Need for education to get "back to the basics".	M	1.92
	SD	.78
	N	50
Need to integrate the "back to the basics" movement in secondary vocational agriculture.	M	2.18
	SD	.77
	N	38

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

Table 8 indicates legislators' perceptions regarding the importance of agricultural education in the public school system. The first two statements are concerned with the importance of vocational agriculture in rural and urban schools. Legislators saw the need for vocational agriculture programs as being of more importance in rural district (1.92) than in urban districts (2.42). The need in rural districts was perceived as being of moderate importance, while the need in urban districts was perceived as being of moderately-low importance.

The final statement in this section dealt with the need for education about agriculture to all students, kindergarten through twelfth grade. Even though

Table 8.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of Importance of Agriculture Education in Public Schools

Statement	Statistic	Value
Need for secondary vocational agriculture programs in rural schools.	M	1.92
	SD	.72
	N	51
Need for secondary vocational agriculture programs in urban schools.	M	2.42
	SD	.62
	N	45
Need for education about agriculture to all students in kindergarten to twelfth grade.	M	2.39
	SD	.75
	N	51

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

legislators perceived agriculture as being highly important in their states (1.09), they felt that the need for education about agriculture was of moderately-low importance (2.39). Only 14.29 percent of the legislators felt that it was of high importance.

Table 9 relates the perceptions of legislators regarding the impact of secondary vocational agriculture in developing students employment and leadership skills. The first statement dealt with the underlying philosophy of vocational education, which is to prepare students for entry level employment. When confronted with the

Table 9.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of the Impact of Secondary Vocational Agriculture

Statement	Statistic	Value
Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in training students for employment.	M	2.29
	SD	.65
	N	48
Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in developing leadership skills.	M	1.96
	SD	.67
	N	46

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

statement, legislators rated the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in training students for employment as being of moderately-low importance (2.29). Only 8.93 percent of the legislators perceived it as being of high importance.

The second statement pertained to leadership development. Legislators perceived that secondary vocational agriculture programs have a moderate impact on helping students develop leadership skills (1.96) with 19.64 percent of the legislators rating the impact as being of high importance.

Table 10 indicates the legislators' perceptions regarding the source of funding for secondary vocational

Table 10.

Legislators' Perceptions of the Funding of Secondary Vocational Agriculture Programs

Statement	Statistic	Value
Need for the local school district to provide funding for the operation of secondary agricultural education programs.	M	2.27
	SD	.66
	N	52
Need for the state government to provide funding for the operation of secondary agricultural education programs.	M	2.31
	SD	.78
	N	52
Need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of secondary agricultural education programs.	M	2.44
	SD	.68
	N	48

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

agriculture programs. The perceptions regarding the funding of secondary vocational agriculture programs by the local school district, state government and federal government were all rated as being of moderately-low importance. Local school districts had the highest mean score (2.27), followed by the state government (2.31) and federal government (2.44) respectively. In contrast to the mean score, the frequency of responses indicated that a larger portion of the legislators felt that the role

of the state government was of higher importance in funding process than the other two sources. Only 17.86 percent of the legislators felt that state government funding was of high importance, while local school district and federal government funding received a high importance rating 10.71 and 8.93 percent of the time respectively.

Table 11 describes the views of legislator regarding legislation pertaining to education. While legislators did not rate the role of state government in funding vocational agriculture as being high, they did feel that the need to equalize funding between school districts was of moderately-high importance (1.57). A large portion of legislators (48.21 percent) perceived that a program to equalize funding was of high importance.

Legislators rated need for a special program to generate revenues for educational funding as being of moderate importance (2.00). Only 21.43 percent of the legislators felt that the need for a special program for funding education was of high importance.

The final statement in this section relates to the priority of educational legislation in the state legislature. Legislators rated education issues as being highly important (1.35), with 73.16 percent of the legislators perceiving it as being of high importance.

Table 11.

Composite of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions of the Importance of Educational Legislation.

Statement	Statistic	Value
Need for state government to equalize funding between school districts.	M	1.56
	SD	.71
	N	48
Need for a special program to generate revenues for educational funding.	M	2.00
	SD	.79
	N	39
Priority of educational legislation in the state legislature.	M	1.35
	SD	.68
	N	54

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

Hypothesis #1 - Objective #3:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators regarding the current situation and future direction of agricultural education programs.

Conclusion: Accept null hypothesis

Rationale: There was no meaningful difference observed between legislators' perceptions of the current situation and future direction of agricultural education programs.

While no meaningful difference was detected, the following pattern was observed. Legislators rated the importance of the future direction higher than the current situation on 18 out of the 22 statements. The importance

of agriculture at the state and district level was perceived as decreasing in importance.

Hypothesis #2 - Objective #4:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of Iowa Legislators and Nebraska Legislators regarding agricultural education programs.

Conclusion: Reject the null hypothesis

Rationale: Legislators from Nebraska rated the need for a special program to generate revenues for educational funding as being of moderately-high importance (1.67), while legislators from Iowa rated this as being of moderately-low importance (2.29). In the responses, 31.03 percent of Nebraska Legislators rated this as being of high importance as compared to 11.11 percent of the Iowa Legislators. Currently, Iowa has a program that distributes tax mileage based on the number of students enrolled in the school district.

The priority of educational legislation in the state legislature was seen as being of high importance (1.07) by Iowa Legislators, while Nebraska Legislators felt it was of moderately high importance (1.63). In the response, 96.30 percent of the Iowa Legislators felt it was of high importance as compared to 51.72 percent of the Nebraska Legislators.

While no other meaningful differences were found in the other attitudinal statements, the following pattern was

evident. Iowa Legislators perceived 17 of the 22 attitudinal statements as being of higher importance than Nebraska Legislators (Appendix E). The more prominent areas are listed as follows:

1. Iowa Legislators responded more positively to adult agricultural education programs.
 - 44.44 percent of the Iowa Legislators compared to 27.59 percent of the Nebraska Legislators felt that the need for adult agricultural education programs was of high importance.
 - 25.93 percent of the Iowa Legislators compared to 3.45 percent of the Nebraska Legislators felt that the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in providing adult agricultural education was of high importance.
 - 40.74 percent of the Iowa Legislators compared to 10.34 percent of the Nebraska Legislators felt that the impact of adult agriculture education programs on improving local agricultural practices was of high importance.
2. Iowa Legislators felt the that need to incorporate the "back to the basics" movement was of higher importance than Nebraska Legislators.
 - 22.22 percent of the Iowa Legislators compared to 6.90 percent of the Nebraska Legislators felt that the need to incorporate the "back to the basics"

movement into vocational agriculture was of high importance.

3. Iowa Legislators perceived the role of the local school district as be more important in the funding process.

- 18.52 percent of the Iowa Legislators as compare to 3.45 percent of the Nebraska Legislators felt that the need for local school districts to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.

Hypothesis #3 - Objective #5:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators from rural districts and legislators from urban districts regarding agricultural education programs.

Conclusion: Reject the null

Rationale: Legislators from rural districts rated the impact of agriculture in their district as high importance (1.07), while legislators from urban districts rated the impact as being of moderate importance (2.15).

Legislators from the rural districts felt the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in developing leadership skills to be of moderately-high importance (1.67). Legislators from the urban districts had a lower perception of the impact of the secondary vocational agriculture program and rated it as having a moderately-low importance (2.27).

It was also observed that legislators from rural districts perceived the need for federal government to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs as being of moderate importance (2.12), while legislators from urban districts rated it as being low importance (2.78).

While no other meaningful differences were found in the other attitudinal statements, the following pattern was evident. Rural legislators perceived 18 of the 22 attitudinal statements as being of higher importance than urban legislators. The more prominent areas are listed as follows:

1. Rural legislators responded more positively to the funding of adult agricultural education program.
 - 16.67 percent of the rural legislators compared to none of the urban legislators felt that the need for free public education in agricultural was of high importance.
 - 13.33 percent of the rural legislators compared to none of the urban legislators felt that the need for state funding of adult agricultural education programs was of high importance.
 - 16.67 percent of the rural legislators compared to 3.85 percent of the urban legislators felt that the need for federal funding for adult agricultural education programs was of high importance.

2. Rural legislators perceived the "back to the basics" movement as being more important.
 - 40.00 percent of the rural legislators compared to 19.23 percent of the urban legislators felt that the need for education to get "back to the basics" was of high importance.
3. Rural legislators had a high opinion of the need for agricultural education in the public school system.
 - 33.33 percent of the rural legislators compared to 19.23 percent of the urban legislators felt that the need for secondary vocational agriculture programs in rural school was of high importance.
 - 10.00 percent of the rural legislators compared to none of the urban legislators felt that the need for secondary vocational agricultural programs in urban schools was of high importance.
 - 20.00 percent of the rural legislators compared to 7.69 percent of the urban legislators felt that the need for education about agricultural for kindergarten through twelfth grade was of high importance.
4. Rural legislators had a higher impression of the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs.
 - 14.67 percent of the rural legislators compared to none of the urban legislators felt that the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in preparing students for employment was of high

importance.

- 30.00 percent of the rural legislators compared to 7.69 percent of the urban legislators felt that the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in developing leadership skills was of high importance.
- 5. Rural legislators responded more positively to the issue of funding secondary vocational agriculture programs.
 - 16.67 percent of the rural legislators compared to 3.45 percent of the urban legislators felt that the need for local school districts to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.
 - 26.67 percent of the rural legislators compared to 7.69 percent of the urban legislators felt that the need for the state government to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.
 - 16.67 percent of the rural legislators compared to none of the urban legislators felt that the need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.

While the rural legislators responded more positively on the majority of the statements, the urban legislators

perceived legislation pertaining to the general funding of education as being of higher importance than rural legislators.

- 61.54 percent of the urban legislators compared to 36.67 percent of the rural legislators felt that the need for the state government to equalize funding between school districts was of high importance.
- 26.92 percent of the urban legislators as compared to 16.67 of the rural legislators felt that the need for a special program to generate funds for education was of high importance.
- 80.77 percent of the urban legislators as compared to 66.67 percent of the rural legislators felt that the priority of educational legislation in the state legislature was of high importance.

Hypothesis #4 - Objective #6:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators with agricultural occupations and legislators with non-agricultural occupations regarding agricultural education programs.

Conclusion: Reject null hypothesis

Rationale: Table 12 shows that the data observed for this objective were very similar to objective 5. In both situations, the comparison of rural/urban districts and agricultural/non-agricultural occupations yielded a meaningful difference for the first three statements listed in the table. A meaningful difference was also noted

Table 12.

Comparison of Means by Rural/Urban District Responses and
Agricultural/Non-Agricultural Occupation Responses

Statement	District		Occupation	
Impact of agriculture in my district.	Rural	1.07	Ag	1.10
	Urban	2.15	Non-Ag	1.86
Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in developing leadership skills.	Rural	1.67	Ag	1.65
	Urban	2.27	Non-Ag	2.19
Need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of secondary agricultural education programs.	Rural	2.12	Ag	2.05
	Urban	2.78	Non-Ag	2.71
Need for secondary vocational agriculture programs in urban schools.	Rural	2.19	Ag	2.11
	Urban	2.63	Non-Ag	2.63

Note. Guidelines for the mean (M) scores are as follows:

- 1.00 - 1.4 = high importance.
- 1.41 - 1.8 = moderately-high importance.
- 1.81 - 2.2 = moderate importance.
- 2.21 - 2.6 = moderately-low importance.
- 2.61 - 3.0 = low importance.

between legislators with agricultural occupations and legislators with non-agricultural occupations regarding the need for secondary vocational agriculture programs in urban schools. While a meaningful difference was not evident between district groups, the mean scores were comparable with those of the occupational groups. While there were no meaningful differences found in the other attitudinal statements, a cross comparison between

occupation and district groups found the perceptions of legislators with agricultural occupations to be very similar to the perceptions of legislators from rural districts. The demographic group consisting of legislators with agricultural occupations showed the same directional tendencies as their counterpart in 20 out of 22 attitudinal statements. The two statements that were different were: a) the need for state government to equalize funding between school districts and b) the need for a special program to generate revenues for educational funding.

Hypothesis #5 - Objective #7:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators who had secondary vocational education training and legislators who did not have secondary vocational education training.

Conclusion: Reject null hypothesis

Rationale: A meaningful difference was observed between the perceptions of legislators with secondary vocational training (2.63) and legislators without secondary vocational training (2.94) regarding the need for the local school districts to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs. While there was a meaningful difference observed, both groups rated the role of the local school district in funding adult agriculture programs as being of low importance.

While no other meaningful differences were found in the other attitudinal statements, the following pattern

was evident. Legislators with secondary vocational training perceived 6 of the 10 attitudinal statements relating to secondary vocational agriculture as being of higher importance. The more prominent areas were as follows:

- 22.22 percent of the legislators with secondary vocational training compared to 6.90 percent of the legislators without such training felt that the need to integrate the "back to the basic" movement into secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.
- 17.24 percent of the legislators with secondary vocational training compared to 3.70 percent of the legislators without such training felt that the need for the local school district to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.
- 27.59 percent of the legislators with secondary vocational training compared to 7.41 percent of those without secondary vocational training felt that the need for the state government to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.

Legislators without secondary vocational training rated 6 out of 7 attitudinal statements about adult agricultural education as being of higher importance. The

more prominent areas were as follows:

- 48.15 percent of the legislators without secondary vocational training compared to 24.14 percent of the legislators with vocational training felt that the need for adult agricultural education programs was of high importance.
- 33.33 percent of the legislators without secondary vocational training compared to 17.24 percent of those who had vocational training felt that the impact of agricultural education programs on improving local agricultural practices was of high importance.
- 14.81 percent of the legislators without secondary vocational training compared to 3.45 percent of the legislators with vocational training felt that the need for free public education in agriculture was of high importance.

Hypothesis #6 - Objective #8:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators who had post-secondary vocational experience and legislators who did not have post-secondary vocational experience.

Conclusion: Accept null hypothesis

Rationale: There were no meaningful differences found between the perceptions of legislators based on post secondary vocational experience.

While no meaningful differences were found in the

attitudinal statements, the following pattern was evident. Legislators with post-secondary vocational experience perceived general educational funding as being of higher importance than legislators without post-secondary vocational experience. The most prominent area was the following:

- 34.48 percent of the legislators with post-secondary vocational experience compared to 7.41 percent of the legislators without such experience felt that the need for a special program to generate funds for education was of high importance.

Hypothesis #7 - Objective #9:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators with less than six years of legislative experience and legislators with six or more years of legislative experience regarding agricultural education programs.

Conclusion: Accept null hypothesis

Rationale: There were no meaningful differences or patterns observed between the perceptions of legislators based on the length of their legislative experience.

Hypothesis #8 - Objective #10:

There is no meaningful difference in perceptions of legislators who were raised on a farm and legislators who were not raised on a farm regarding agricultural education programs.

Conclusion: Reject null hypothesis

Rationale: Legislators who were raised on a farm rated the need to integrate the "back to the basics" movement into

secondary vocational agriculture as being of moderate importance (1.90), while legislators who were not raised on a farm felt that the integration of the "back to the basics" movement into secondary vocational agriculture was of moderately-low importance (2.53).

While no other meaningful differences were found in the other attitudinal statements, the following pattern was evident. Legislators who were raised on a farm perceived 16 of the 22 attitudinal statements as being of higher importance than legislators who were not raised on a farm. The more prominent areas were as follows:

1. Legislators who were raised on a farm responded more positively to funding of adult agricultural education programs.
 - 13.33 percent of the legislators who were raised on a farm compared to 3.85 percent of the legislators who were not raised on a farm felt that the need for free public adult education in agriculture was of high importance.
 - 16.67 percent of the legislators who were raised on a farm compared to 3.85 percent of the legislators who were not raised on a farm felt that the need for the federal government to provide funding for adult agricultural education programs was of high importance.

2. Legislators who were raised on a farm responded more positively towards the funding of secondary vocational agriculture programs.
 - 20.00 percent of the legislators who were raised on a farm compared to none of the legislators who were not raised on a farm felt that the need for local school districts to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.
 - 23.33 percent of the legislators who were raised on a farm compared to 11.54 percent of the legislators who were not raised on a farm felt that the need for state government to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs was of high importance.

Major Findings

The major findings of this study include:

1. Ninety-one percent of the legislators (96% in Iowa and 86% in Nebraska) felt that the impact of agriculture was of high importance in their state.
2. Fifty-seven percent of the legislators (56% in Iowa and 59% in Nebraska) felt that the impact of agriculture was of high importance in their district.

3. Only fourteen percent of the legislators (26% in Iowa and 3% in Nebraska) perceived the impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs providing adult agricultural education as being high importance.
4. Just seven percent of the legislators (11% in Iowa and 3% in Nebraska) rated need for funding of adult agricultural education programs by the state government as being of high importance.
5. Only fourteen percent of the legislators (22% in Iowa and 7% in Nebraska) felt the need to integrate the "back to the basics" movement into vocational agriculture as being of high importance.
6. Less than nine percent of the legislators (11% in Iowa and 7% in Nebraska) felt that the impact of secondary vocational agriculture in preparing students for employment was of high importance.
7. Nineteen percent of the legislators (22% in Iowa and 17% in Nebraska) felt that the impact of secondary vocational agriculture in developing leadership skills was of high importance.
8. Only fourteen percent of the legislators (14.81% in Iowa and 13.79% in Nebraska) felt that the need for education about agriculture for all students kindergarten through twelfth grade was of high importance.

9. Eighteen percent of the legislators (19% in Iowa and 17% in Nebraska) rated need for funding of secondary vocational agricultural programs by the state government as being of high importance.
10. Seventy-three percent of the legislators (Iowa - 96% and Nebraska - 52%) rated the priority of educational legislation as being of high importance in the state legislature.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Iowa and Nebraska Legislators regarding secondary and adult agricultural education programs conducted through the public school system.

The population for the study consisted of 100 Representatives and 50 Senators in Iowa and 49 Senators in Nebraska. The sample used in the study consisted of 35 Iowa Legislators and 35 Nebraska Legislators.

A questionnaire was developed from a review of literature. Twenty-two attitudinal items were developed to reflect the a) need, b) benefit, c) operation and funding of both secondary and adult agricultural education.

A survey was used to collect the data for the study. Questionnaires were mailed to all randomly selected legislators. A follow-up mailing and telephone calls were made to non-respondents.

Of the 35 Iowa Legislators selected for the study, 27 legislators (77.14 percent) returned completed surveys. Of the 35 Nebraska Legislators selected for the study, 29 legislators (82.86 percent) returned completed surveys. The overall response rate was 56 out of 70 legislators completing surveys for an 80 percent survey return rate.

The following guidelines were used to evaluate the perception of legislators regarding agricultural education programs: on a 3 point scale a mean score of 1 to 1.4 was identified as high importance, a mean score of 1.41 to 1.8 was identified as moderately-high importance, a mean score of 1.81 to 2.2 was identified as moderate importance, a mean score of 2.21 to 2.6 was identified as moderately-low importance and a mean score of 2.61 to 3 was identified as low importance.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the 22 attitudinal statements to determine the perceptions of the state legislators. Frequency percentages were also calculated and used to identify patterns in the perceptions of the different demographic groups.

Demographic data showed that there was an even division of legislators into the various the demographic groups. Of the legislators surveyed, the following was observed: a) 54 percent were from rural districts, b) 35.71 percent were currently employed in agricultural occupations, c) 48 percent had secondary vocational training, d) 52 percent had experience either teaching or attending post-secondary vocational courses, e) 50 percent had six or more years of legislative experience and f) 54 percent were raised on a farm.

A large portion of the legislators (91.07 percent) agreed that agriculture was of high importance in their

state; however, the importance of agriculture in their individual legislative district was rated of lower importance with only 57.14 percent rating it as being of high importance.

The need for adult agricultural education programs was rated as being of moderate importance (1.80) by legislators. When confronted with whether adult agricultural education programs needed to be freely offered to the public, legislators responded by rating it as being of moderately-low importance (2.40).

In general, adult agricultural education programs were seen to have moderate importance (1.88) in improving local agricultural practices; however, the effectiveness of secondary vocational agriculture programs were seen as being of moderate-low importance (2.27) in conducting these adult programs.

Legislators felt that the importance of the local school districts in funding adult programs were of low importance (2.85). The perceptions of roles of the state and federal government in funding adult agricultural education programs were very similar. Legislators rated the roles of state government (2.24) and federal government (2.38) as being of moderately-low importance.

The need to for education to get "back to the basics" was seen as being of moderate importance (1.92), while the need to incorporate this concept into vocational

agriculture was seen as being of lower importance (2.18) by the legislators. There was a much higher non-response rate concerning the integration of the basics into vocational agriculture (32.14 percent) as compared to education in general (10.71 percent).

Legislators viewed the role of agricultural education in the public school system as being very specific. Legislators perceived that agricultural education was of moderate importance (1.92) in rural schools. The need for agricultural education programs in urban schools (2.42) and the need for education about agriculture for grades kindergarten through twelfth (2.39) was rated as being of moderately-low importance.

Secondary vocational agriculture programs were perceived as being of moderate importance (1.96) in developing leadership skills in students and of moderately-low importance (2.29) in training students for employment.

Legislators rated the role of the local school district, state government and federal government as being of moderately-low importance in the funding of secondary vocational agriculture programs. Of the three sources, local school districts had the highest mean score (2.27), followed by state government (2.31) and federal government (2.44).

Legislators responded positively to the statements concerning the general funding process for education. The

priority of educational legislation in the legislature was rated as being of high importance (1.35). Legislators also felt the need for the state government to equalize funding between local school districts as being of moderately-high importance (1.56). While the need for a special program to fund education was perceived as being of lower priority, legislators still felt that such a program was of moderate importance (2.00).

Legislators rated 18 of the 22 attitudinal statements as being of higher importance in the future direction of agricultural education programs as compared to the current situation of agricultural education programs. While this pattern was observed, there was no meaningful difference detected between legislators' perceptions of the current situation and future direction of agriculture education programs.

Overall Iowa Legislators perceived 17 of the 22 attitudinal statements as being of higher importance than Nebraska Legislators. Meaningful difference was observed regarding the priority of educational legislation in the state legislature. Other patterns observed were in the areas of: a) adult agricultural education, b) the "back to the basics" movement and c) role of the local school districts in funding secondary vocational agriculture programs. Legislators from Nebraska rated the need for a special program to generate revenues for

educational funding as being of more importance than legislators from Nebraska.

Rural legislators perceived 18 of the 22 attitudinal statements as being of higher importance than urban legislators. Meaningful differences in perceptions were observed in three areas: a) the impact of agriculture in their district, b) impact of secondary vocational agriculture program in developing leadership skills in students and c) the need for federal funding of secondary vocational agriculture programs. Other patterns were observed regarding: a) the funding of adult agricultural education programs, b) the "back to the basics" movement, c) need for agricultural education in the public school system, d) impact of the secondary vocational agriculture program in training students and e) funding of secondary vocational agriculture programs. Urban legislators tended to be more supportive of issues related to the general funding of education.

It was observed that perceptions of legislators with agricultural/non-agricultural occupations were very similar to the perceptions of rural/urban districts. Legislators with agricultural occupations showed the same directional tendency on 20 out of 22 attitudinal statements. The two statements with different tendencies were: a) the need for state government to equalize funding between school districts and b) the need for a special

program to generate revenues for educational funding.

Legislators with secondary vocational training responded more positively on 6 out of 10 attitudinal statements pertaining to secondary vocational agriculture. Legislators without secondary vocational training rated 6 out of 7 attitudinal statements about adult agricultural education as being of higher importance.

Legislators with post-secondary vocational experience rated the priority of issues regarding the general funding of education as being of higher importance than legislators without post-secondary vocational experience. The most prominent area related to the need of a special program to generate funds for education.

There were no differences observed between the perceptions of legislators with less than six years of legislative experience and legislators with six or more years of legislative experience.

Legislators who were raised on a farm responded more positively on 16 of the 22 attitudinal statements. A meaningful difference was observed regarding the need to integrate the "back to the basics" movement into secondary vocational agriculture. Other patterns were related to: a) the funding of adult agricultural education programs and b) the funding of secondary vocational agriculture programs.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of this study:

- 1) While agriculture and general education issues are perceived as important in Iowa and Nebraska, agricultural education conducted through the secondary school system is perceived as being of lower importance.
- 2) Legislators who have ties with agricultural are more supportive of issues related to agricultural education as conducted through the secondary school system.
- 3) Legislators perceive the mission of secondary vocational agriculture programs as being limited to the high school students primarily in rural areas and not branching to groups beyond this clientele.
- 4) Legislators are not supportive of any changes in the source of funding for educational programs. While they are supportive of the general funding of education, they do not support programs that tend to target funding towards individual agricultural education programs.
- 5) Legislators have a very specialized task of allocating funds for education and are not familiar with the other aspects of agricultural education as conducted through the secondary school system.
- 6) Legislators from Iowa are more supportive of agricultural education, especially adult agricultural education programs than legislators from Nebraska.

7) Major changes in the amount of support coming from state legislators will not come from within, but must be initiated by the agricultural education profession.

Recommendations

As the result of the conclusions drawn from this study the following actions were recommended:

1. The Departments of Education, Vocational Agriculture Teacher Associations and the Agricultural Education Departments in Iowa and Nebraska should be made aware of the findings of this study for use in increasing the support of agricultural education by state legislators.
2. The agricultural education profession should be encouraged to develop a proactive lobbying program, in addition to the traditional public relations programs, in order to inform legislators about the benefits of secondary and adult agricultural education as conducted through the secondary school system.
3. The agricultural education profession should be encouraged to identify and use legislators and others within business and industry to increase the legislative support of agricultural education.
4. Local agricultural educators should be encouraged to revitalize the vocational agriculture curriculum to reflect the interpersonal and technical skills needed in the fields of agricultural science, technology and marketing.

5. Local agricultural educators should be encouraged to convey the needs and benefits of agricultural education by involving their representative(s) in agricultural education activities.

6. Local agricultural educators should be encouraged to provide educational programs to inform the public of the importance agricultural education in maintaining the viability of agriculture within their state.

7. More in depth investigations should be conducted to study the relationship between legislators' perceptions and the support of agricultural education programs as conducted through the secondary school system.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire

Perceptions of Agricultural Education Programs

Please answer the following questions by checking (✓) the appropriate blank.

I have been a state legislator for...

_____ 1 to 5 years _____ 6 to 10 years _____ 11 or more years

My legislative constituents live mainly in...

_____ rural areas _____ urban areas

While in high school, I participated in _____ years of vocational education. (If answer is 0 then skip the next question)

_____ 0 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4

While in high school, I participated in vocational education courses in the following area(s)...

_____ agriculture _____ business _____ home economics
_____ industrial arts _____ health education _____ other

I have participated in an adult education program conducted by a community college or public school system.

_____ yes _____ no

I was raised on a farm.

_____ yes _____ no

Please indicate to what extent you believe the following statements to be important. The left column is what you believe the current situation is today. The right column is what you believe the direction should be in five years.

1 = (H)igh importance
2 = (M)oderate importance

3 = (L)ow importance
4 = (U)ncertain

Current Situation		Future Direction
H M L U		H M L U
1 2 3 4	Impact of agriculture in my district	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Impact of agriculture in the state	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Need for adult agricultural education programs	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in providing adult agricultural education	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Impact of adult agricultural education programs on improving local agricultural practices	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Need for free public adult education in agriculture	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Need for the local school district to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs	1 2 3 4

(continued on the back)

1 = (H)igh importance
2 = (M)oderate importance

3 = (L)ow importance
4 = (U)nknown

Current Situation					Future Direction				
H	M	L	U		H	M	L	U	
1	2	3	4	Need for state government to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for education to get "back to the basics"	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need to integrate the "back to the basics" movement into secondary vocational agriculture	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need of secondary vocational agriculture education programs in rural schools	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for secondary vocational agriculture education programs in urban schools	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for education about agriculture to all students in kindergarten through twelfth grade	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in training students for employment	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in developing leadership skills	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for the local school district to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for state government to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of secondary vocational agriculture programs	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for state government to equalize funding between school districts	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Need for a special program to generate revenues for educational funding	1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	Priority of educational legislation in the state legislature	1	2	3	4	

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return the survey in the self addressed, stamped envelope to...

Agricultural Education Department
300 Ag Hall
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska 68583-0709

Appendix B
Cover Letter

March 2, 1988

Dear

I am currently conducting a two state study on legislators' perceptions of agricultural education at the secondary and adult levels. This study is part of my graduate work in the field of agricultural education at the University of Nebraska. As a selected legislator, I would appreciate your input concerning the importance of agricultural education in Iowa.

I respectfully request that you, the legislator rather than your aide, complete the questionnaire, so that the data will accurately reflect legislators' perceptions. Information gained in this study will be used for group data analysis only. No individual data will be reported.

The sampling procedure includes a follow-up mailing to those individuals not responding within the first two weeks. Please help us save additional printing and postage by completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire in the stamped, self addressed envelope by March 15.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Bruce Burger
Graduate Student

Dr. James Horner
Professor

enclosure:

Appendix C
Follow-up Letter to Non-respondents

March 16, 1988

Dear

Two weeks ago you received a questionnaire seeking your perceptions of agricultural education at the secondary and adult levels. As of this time, we have not received your questionnaire. I am aware this is a very busy time of year and that you may not have had the time to respond yet.

Since only a small sample of legislators were selected, your completed questionnaire is very important to this study. Another questionnaire along with a self addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided.

If you have already returned the survey, please disregard this letter.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Bruce Burger
Graduate Student

Dr. James Horner
Professor

enclosure:

Appendix D
Code Sheets for Questionnaire

Code Sheet for the Questionnaire on
Legislators' Perception of Agricultural Education Programs

Column	Variables	Description of Code
1	State	1 = Nebraska Legislators 2 = Iowa Legislators
2	Occupation	1 = agricultural 2 = non-agricultural
3	Legislative Experience	0 = missing values 1 = 1 to 5 years 2 = 6 to 10 years 3 = 11 or more years
4	District Composition	0 = missing values 1 = rural 2 = urban
5	Years of Vocational Education	0 = missing values 1 = 0 years 2 = 1 year 3 = 2 years 4 = 3 years 5 = 4 years
6	Area of Secondary Vocational Training	0 = missing values 1 = agriculture 2 = industrial arts 3 = business 4 = health education 5 = home economics 6 = combination
7	Experience in Post-Secondary Vocational Education	0 = missing values 1 = yes 2 = no
8	Raised on a Farm	0 = missing values 1 = yes 2 = no
9 - 30	Current Situation	0 = missing values 1 = high importance 2 = moderate importance 3 = low importance 4 = unknown importance

31 - 52 Future
 Direction

0 = missing values
1 = high importance
2 = moderate importance
3 = low importance
4 = unknown importance

53 Response
 Groups

1 = after mailing
2 = after telephone call

Appendix E
Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions
Regarding Agricultural Education

Appendix E.

Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions Regarding Agricultural Education.

Statement		Iowa	Nebraska
Impact of agriculture in my state.	F1	96.30	86.21
	F2	3.70	13.79
	F3	0.00	0.00
	F4	0.00	0.00
	M	1.04	1.14
Impact of agriculture in my district.	F1	55.56	58.65
	F2	33.33	17.24
	F3	11.11	20.69
	F4	0.00	3.45
	M	1.56	1.61
Need for adult agricultural education programs.	F1	44.44	27.59
	F2	48.15	41.38
	F3	7.41	24.14
	F4	0.00	6.90
	M	1.63	1.96
Need for free public adult education in agriculture.	F1	14.81	3.45
	F2	40.74	27.59
	F3	40.74	44.83
	F4	3.70	24.14
	M	2.27	2.55
Impact of adult agricultural education programs on improving local agricultural practices.	F1	40.74	10.34
	F2	40.74	55.17
	F3	14.81	13.79
	F4	3.70	20.69
	M	1.73	2.04
Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in providing adult agricultural education programs.	F1	25.93	3.45
	F2	40.74	27.59
	F3	29.63	44.83
	F4	3.70	24.14
	M	2.04	2.55

Note. F1 = percent response for high importance.
 F2 = percent response for moderate importance.
 F3 = percent response for low importance.
 F4 = percent for non-respondent.
 M = mean score without unknown responses
 * = meaningfully different.

Appendix D continued.

Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions Regarding
Agricultural Education.

Statement		Iowa	Nebraska
Need for the local school district to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs.	F1	0.00	0.00
	F2	11.11	24.14
	F3	62.96	48.28
	F4	25.93	27.59
	M	2.85	2.67
Need for the state government to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs.	F1	11.11	3.45
	F2	48.15	37.93
	F3	25.93	24.14
	F4	14.81	34.48
	M	2.17	2.32
Need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of adult agricultural education programs.	F1	11.11	10.34
	F2	33.33	17.24
	F3	40.74	37.93
	F4	14.81	34.48
	M	2.35	2.42
Need for education to get "back to the basics".	F1	29.63	31.03
	F2	40.74	31.03
	F3	18.52	27.59
	F4	11.11	10.34
	M	1.88	1.96
Need to integrate the "back to the basics" movement in secondary vocational agriculture.	F1	22.22	6.90
	F2	22.22	31.03
	F3	29.63	24.14
	F4	25.93	37.93
	M	2.10	2.28

Note. F1 = percent response for high importance.
 F2 = percent response for moderate importance.
 F3 = percent response for low importance.
 F4 = percent for non-respondent.
 M = mean score without unknown responses.
 * = meaningfully different.

Appendix D continued.

Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions Regarding Agricultural Education.

Statement		Iowa	Nebraska
Need for secondary vocational agriculture programs in rural schools.	F1	29.63	24.14
	F2	44.44	44.83
	F3	25.93	13.79
	F4	0.00	17.24
	M	1.96	1.88
Need for secondary vocational agriculture programs in urban schools.	F1	7.41	3.45
	F2	40.74	31.03
	F3	37.04	41.38
	F4	14.81	24.14
	M	2.35	2.50
Need for education about agriculture to all students in kindergarten to twelfth grade.	F1	14.81	13.79
	F2	25.93	27.59
	F3	44.44	55.17
	F4	14.81	3.45
	M	2.35	2.43
Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in training students for employment.	F1	11.11	6.90
	F2	48.15	37.93
	F3	33.33	34.48
	F4	7.41	20.69
	M	2.24	2.35
Impact of secondary vocational agriculture programs in developing leadership skills.	F1	22.22	17.24
	F2	48.15	44.83
	F3	18.52	13.79
	F4	11.11	24.14
	M	1.96	1.95
Need for the local school district to provide funding for the operation of secondary agricultural education programs.	F1	18.52	3.45
	F2	40.74	51.72
	F3	40.74	31.03
	F4	0.00	13.79
	M	2.22	2.32

Note. F1 = percent response for high importance.

F2 = percent response for moderate importance.

F3 = percent response for low importance.

F4 = percent for non-respondent.

M = mean score without unknown responses.

* = meaningfully different.

Appendix D continued.

Iowa and Nebraska Legislators' Perceptions Regarding
Agricultural Education.

Statement		Iowa	Nebraska
Need for the state government to provide funding for the operation of secondary agricultural education programs.	F1	18.52	17.24
	F2	29.63	27.59
	F3	48.15	44.83
	F4	3.70	10.34
	M	2.31	2.31
Need for the federal government to provide funding for the operation of secondary agricultural education programs.	F1	7.41	10.34
	F2	40.74	20.69
	F3	48.15	44.83
	F4	3.70	24.14
	M	2.42	2.45
Need for state government to equalize funding between schools districts.	F1	55.56	41.38
	F2	18.52	34.48
	F3	11.11	10.34
	F4	14.81	13.79
	M	1.48	1.64
Need for a special program to generate revenues for educational funding.	F1	11.11	31.03
	F2	33.33	20.69
	F3	33.33	10.34
	F4	22.22	37.93
	M	2.29*	1.67*
Priority of education legislation in the state legislature.	F1	96.30	51.72
	F2	0.00	24.14
	F3	3.70	17.24
	F4	0.00	6.90
	M	1.07*	1.63*

Note: F1 = percent response for high importance.
 F2 = percent response for moderate importance.
 F3 = percent response for low importance.
 F4 = percent for non-respondent.
 M = mean score without unknown response.
 * = meaningfully different.